DC
NO. 301 JULY
30430
35¢
BATMAN
YOU MURDERED MY HUSBAND, BATMAN!
WHY?
WHY?
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
THE EXPLOSIVE STORY OF "THE ONLY MAN BATMAN EVER KILLED!"

# "THE TOUGHEST PITCHER I EVER FACED."

## by Johnny Bench

Tough? This pitcher was inhuman. Absolutely tireless, for one thing. And I was looking at a variety of pitches like you wouldn't believe. Different speeds: fast balls, slow balls, and everything

in between. Plenty of sliders. And the world's toughest knuckler.

But don't get me wrong. It was great batting practice. It always is. Because the pitcher I'm talking about isn't a person, and isn't a toy. What it is, is the best training device I've ever seen. It's made by Fonas, and it's called Johnny Bench Batter Up.

With Batter Up, you can practice for hours by yourself. You learn to keep your eye on the ball and follow the ball's movement. It helps develop quick reflexes. Helps your timing. But the most important thing it does, is help you develop a level swing. You know when you've hit it wrong. You also know when you've done everything right.

Batter Up is built to last. It doesn't take up a lot of room, and you don't have to chase the ball. It just keeps

coming back for more. And the more batting practice you get, the more you'll get to know your own swing and learn to develop it into a good one.

Like I said, this one's a tough pitcher to face. But if it were real easy, it wouldn't be any fun, either.

You can find your Johnny Bench Batter Up wherever toys or sporting goods are sold. Some assembly required.

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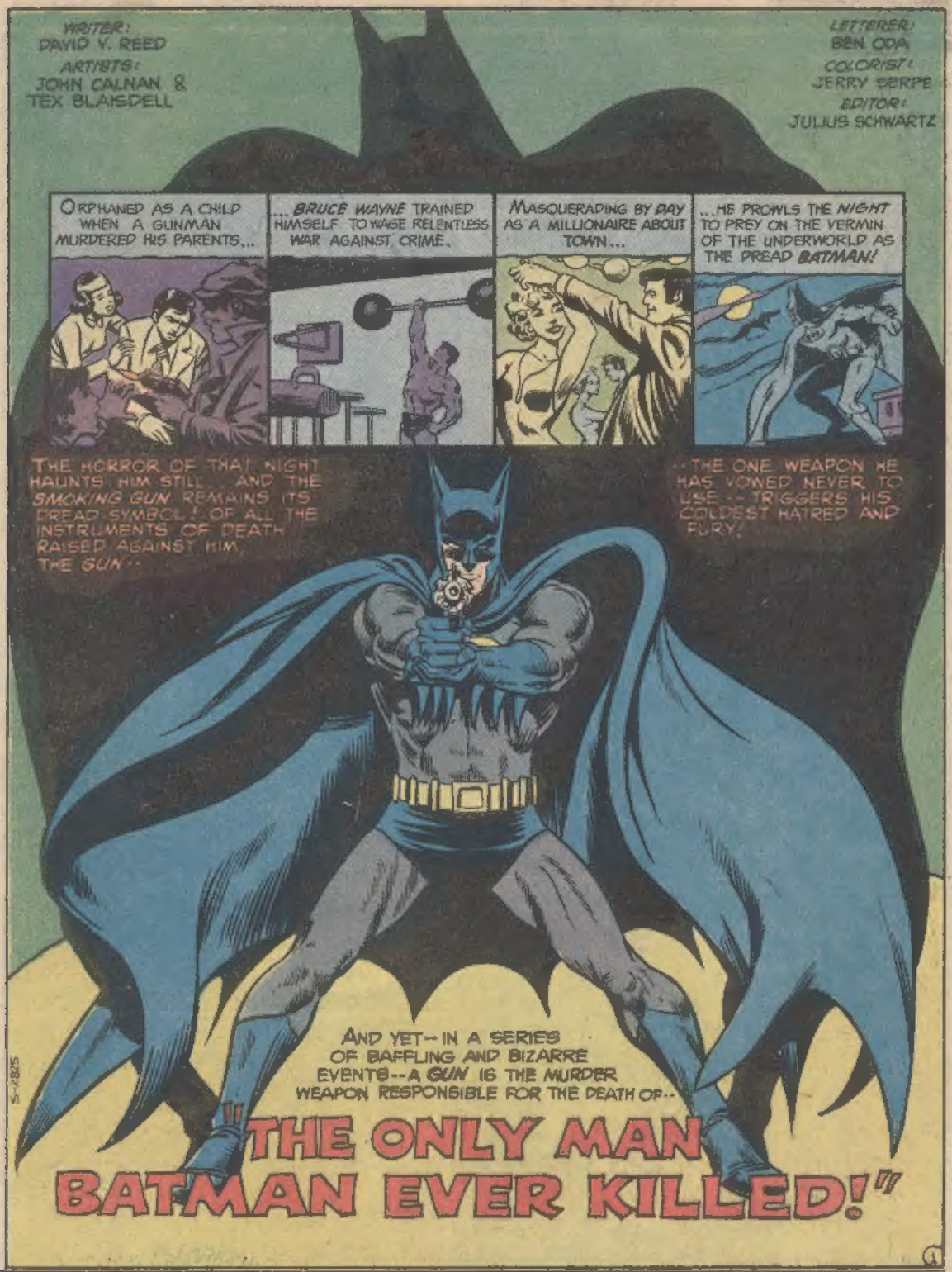
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EDITOR:
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ORPHANED AS A CHILD WHEN A GUNMAN MURDERED HIS PARENTS...
...BRUCE WAYNE TRAINED HIMSELF TO WAGE RELENTLESS WAR AGAINST CRIME.
MASQUERADING BY DAY AS A MILLIONAIRE ABOUT TOWN...
...HE PROWLS THE NIGHT TO PREY ON THE VERMIN OF THE UNDERWORLD AS THE DREAD BATMAN!
THE HORROR OF THAT NIGHT HAUNTS HIM STILL AND THE SMOKING GUN REMAINS ITS DREAD SYMBOL! OF ALL THE INSTRUMENTS OF DEATH RAISED AGAINST HIM THE GUN--
--THE ONE WEAPON HE HAS VOWED NEVER TO USE--TRIGGERS HIS COLDEST HATRED AND FURY!
AND YET--IN A SERIES OF BAFFLING AND BIZARRE EVENTS--A GUN IS THE MURDER WEAPON RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEATH OF--
THE ONLY MAN BATMAN EVER KILLED!"
S-2825
1

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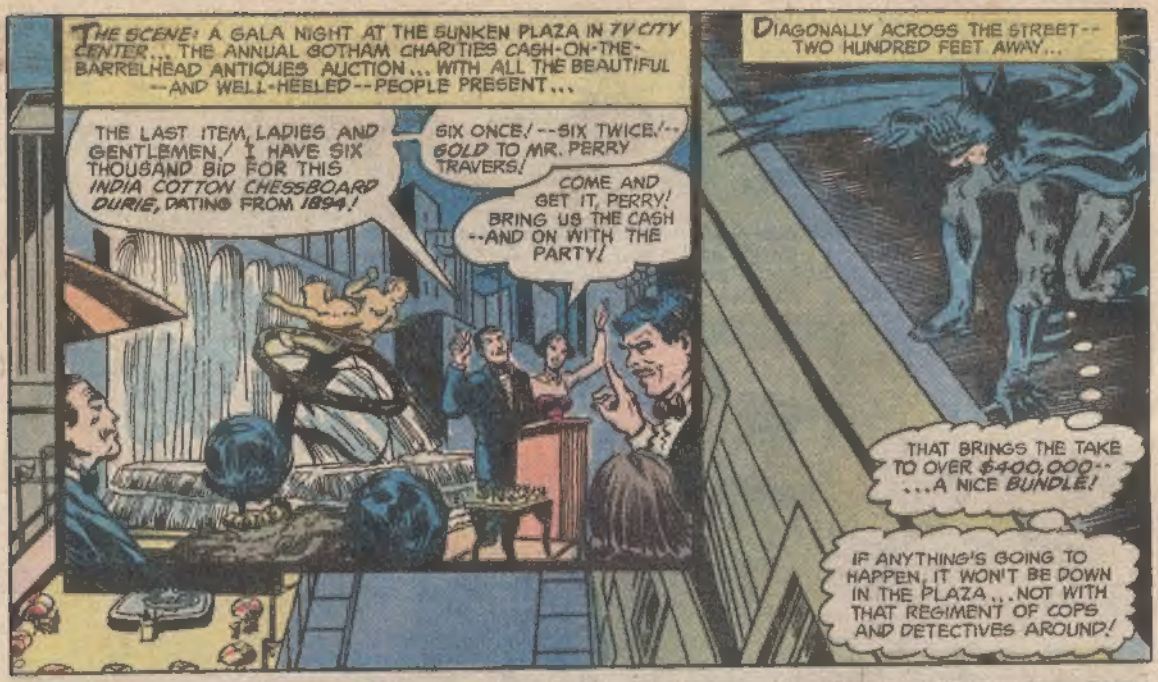
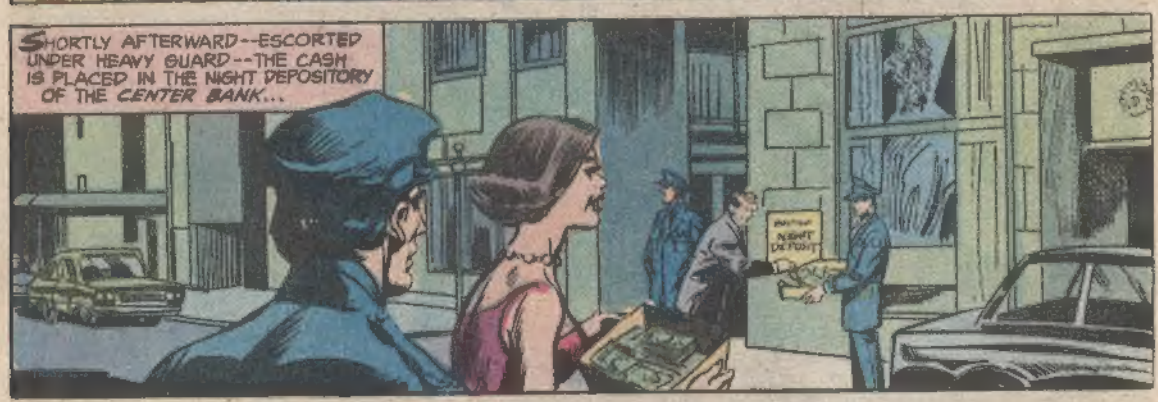
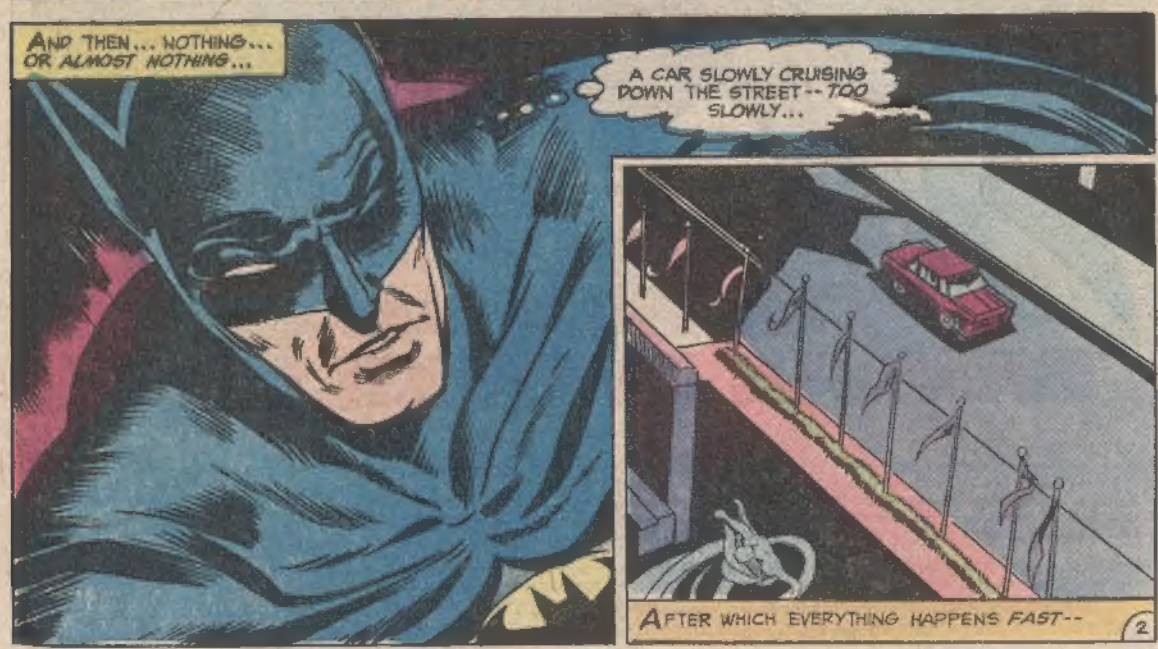
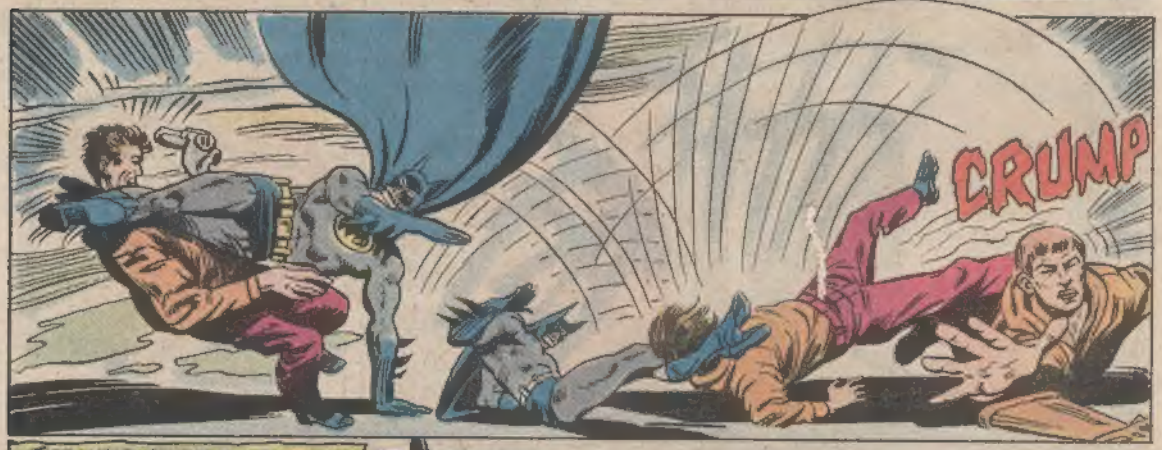
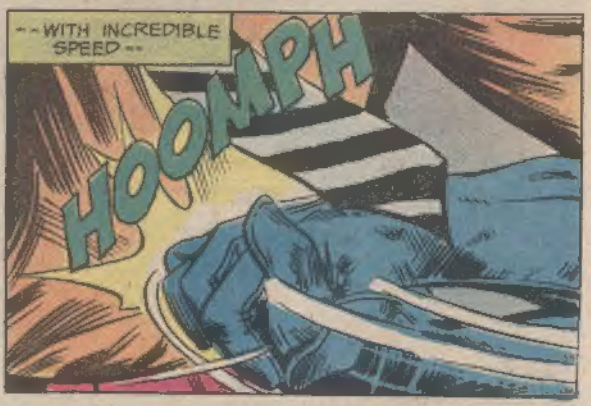

THE SCENE: A GALA NIGHT AT THE SUNKEN PLAZA IN 7V CITY CENTER... THE ANNUAL GOTHAM CHARITIES CASH-ON-THE-BARRELHEAD ANTIQUES AUCTION... WITH ALL THE BEAUTIFUL --AND WELL-HEELED--PEOPLE PRESENT...
THE LAST ITEM, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN./ I HAVE SIX THOUSAND BID FOR THIS INDIA COTTON CHESSBOARD DURIE, DATING FROM 1894!
SIX ONCE!--SIX TWICE!--SOLD TO MR. PERRY TRAVERS!
COME AND GET IT, PERRY! BRING US THE CASH --AND ON WITH THE PARTY!
DIAGONALLY ACROSS THE STREET-- TWO HUNDRED FEET AWAY...
THAT BRINGS THE TAKE TO OVER $400,000-- ...A NICE BUNDLE!
IF ANYTHING'S GOING TO HAPPEN, IT WON'T BE DOWN IN THE PLAZA...NOT WITH THAT REGIMENT OF COPS AND DETECTIVES AROUND!


SHORTLY AFTERWARD--ESCORTED UNDER HEAVY GUARD--THE CASH IS PLACED IN THE NIGHT DEPOSITORY OF THE CENTER BANK...


AND THEN... NOTHING... OR ALMOST NOTHING...
A CAR SLOWLY CRUISING DOWN THE STREET--TOO SLOWLY...
AFTER WHICH EVERYTHING HAPPENS FAST--

FIRST--THE DIABOLICALLY CUNNING CAPER STARTS WITH A--
BAROOOOOM
THE NEXT INSTANT--THREE MEN SUDDENLY MATERIALIZE ON THE DESERTED STREET! ONE COMES SPECIAL DELIVERY FROM THE STORAGE MAILBOX--PITCHING TEAR GAS...
BRAM
SIMULTANEOUSLY, A RED ROD TEAM RISES FROM THE DEPTHS TO JOIN HIM!...
NO WASTE MOTION!--EVERY MOVE CHOREOGRAPHED!--THE ARRIVAL OF THE GETAWAY CAR IS PRECISION ITSELF!
EVEN THE WIND WORKS WITH THEM--BLOWING THE NOXIOUS FUMES TOWARDS THE PLAZA! THE BIGGEST UNAUTHORIZED BANK WITHDRAWAL IN RECENT HISTORY IS PROCEEDING MARVELOUSLY--
--UNTIL--





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KRONK
WOK
IT IS OVER ... THE BATMAN'S WORK IS FINISHED!
...AND THAT EXPLOSION WAS TRIGGERED BY A RADIO-IMPULSE FROM THE CREEP IN THE MAIL-STORAGE BOX--TO A BOMB THAT HAD BEEN PREVIOUSLY PLANTED INSIDE THE BANK!
BUT THAT'S SOMETHING FOR YOUR BOYS TO DIG INTO, COMMISSIONER!
MEANWHILE, THE SCORE STANDS "BATMAN"--$400,000 AND FOUR COLLARS... BOXMEN AND HEISTERS--ZERO!"
THEN--ANOTHER STATISTIC TO ADD TO THE NIGHT'S COMBAT--A TRAGIC ACCIDENT...
WHO--?
A MAN NAMED JUDSON PRICE!
A STRAY BULLET--PROBABLY A RICOCHET--KILLED HIM INSTANTLY!
5

SOON AFTER... AT THE PENTHOUSE WHERE THE BRILLIANT CRIME-FIGHTER LIVES HIS LUXURIOUS AND FLAMBOYANT PUBLIC LIFE AS BRUCE WAYNE, MILLIONAIRE INDUSTRIALIST AND MAN-ABOUT-TOWN...
YOU'RE HOME VERY EARLY, MASTER BRUCE... AND YOU LOOK EXTREMELY LOW, IF I MAY SAY SO.
I'VE HAD IT FOR TONIGHT, ALFRED! YOU'D THINK BY NOW I'D HAVE LEARNED NOT TO BE OVERLY AFFECTED BY SOME OF THE SENSELESS TRAGEDIES I SEE...
...BUT I STILL FEEL THEM... RIGHT IN THE GUT!
AND SO THE REST OF THE EVENING PASSES QUIETLY...
BUT JUST PAST MIDNIGHT, THINGS SUDDENLY START JUMPING! AN URGENT SUMMONS FROM COMMISSIONER GORDON BRINGS THE BATMAN HURRIEDLY TO THE METRO HOSPITAL MORGUE!
THERE'S BEEN AN INCREDIBLE DEVELOPMENT IN THAT JUDSON PRICE KILLING EARLIER TONIGHT!
THEY AUTOPSIED THE VICTIM -- A TOP SHIPPING EXECUTIVE AND A MAN OF IMPECCABLE REPUTATION IN HIS COMMUNITY--
-- AND IMBEDDED IN THE BASE OF HIS SKULL, THEY FOUND THIS PLATINUM IMPLANT!
AN ANKH! THE ANCIENT EGYPTIAN SYMBOL OF LIFE!
SILENT SECONDS TICK AWAY AS THEY STARE AT EACH OTHER...
THE MESSAGE IMPLICIT IN THIS MINUTE BIT OF METAL IS CATASTROPHIC... AND BOTH MEN FULLY COMPREHEND IT!
FOR YEARS, THERE HAVE BEEN VAGUE, FANCIFUL STORIES ABOUT A SUPREMELY SECRET OVERLORD OF CRIME... WHOSE AUTHORITY TRANSCENDS ALL OTHER MOB BOSSES IN GOTHAM CITY...
6

TO MAINTAIN HIS POWER AGAINST THE CONSTANT THREAT OF POSSIBLE REBELLION--THE TALE GOES--THE OVERLORD HAS A HIDDEN AND IMPENETRABLE PHALANX OF SO-CALLED "WIRE-HEADS"..
SHOULD THE OVERLORD DIE ANY BUT A NATURAL DEATH, THIS COVERT FORCE OF "WIRE-HEADS"--PEOPLE TOTALLY UNAWARE OF THEIR CONDITION--IS PROGRAMMED TO KILL ANYONE EVEN REMOTELY CONNECTED WITH THAT DEATH!
THE POLICE DEPARTMENT'S INTELLIGENCE DIVISION HAS LONG DOCUMENTED THESE STORIES REALIZING THAT IT HAS THE EXTRAORDINARY EXPLOSIVE "IFS" TO CONTEND WITH--
IF THE FABLE IS TRUE--AND IF THE "WIRE HEADS" ARE EVER ACTIVATED--THE RESULT PORTENDS THE WORST BLOOD-BATH IN GOTHAM CITY'S DARKEST ANNALS!
BUT NO SUPPORTING EVIDENCE HAS EVER SURFACED, AND FINDING ANY OF THESE LEGENDARY "WIRE-HEADS" IS NEXT TO IMPOSSIBLE--FOR THERE IS SUPPOSEDLY NOTHING TO MARK THESE CREATURES--EXCEPT A PLATINUM ANKH SECRETLY INGRAFTED TO THEIR SKULLS!
THAT IS THE FEARFUL MEANING OF THE GLITTERING OBJECT IN THE BATMAN'S HAND--THE STORIES ARE ALL TRUE!
NOW BRIEFLY, THE BATMAN AND COMMISSIONER GORDON CONVERSE IN HUSHED TONES--
WELL, SIR, WE'VE OFTEN DISCUSSED THIS POSSIBILITY, AND FORTUNATELY WE HAVE A PLAN OF ACTION!
WHAT'S MORE, WE NOW HAVE THE PERFECT OPPORTUNITY TO UNCOVER THE HIDDEN MOB CONNECTION YOU SUSPECT IN YOUR TOP COMMAND--AND USE IT IN OUR PLAN!
RIGHT, BATMAN--STARTING THIS MINUTE!
THE ANKH BY ITSELF MEANS NOTHING AND LEADS NOWHERE TRYING TO FIGURE THIS OUT WOULD BE A WASTE OF MY TIME--
-SO I SEE NO REASON TO POSTPONE MY LONG DELAYED VACATION ANY LONGER!
BUT BATMAN--HOW DO I GET IN TOUCH WITH YOU--?
SORRY, COMMISSIONER--NO WAY!
7

EXACTLY FOURTEEN HOURS LATER--3:15 THE NEXT AFTERNOON--COMMISSIONER GORDON GETS A WHOLE NEW MESS OF TROUBLE... BIG TROUBLE.., WEIRD AND TERRIFYING -
THE RESULT: THE SERGEANT INTERRUPTS A TOP ECHELON STAFF MEETING--
HE'S A CHARACTER, SIR.. MAYBE A KOOK ..BUT THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT HIM ..
A BLANK SHEET!? HMMMMM... SHOW HIM IN SERGEANT!
AN ODDLY GARBED STRANGER, OF POWERFUL, MAGNETIC PRESENCE, APPEARS AT POLICE H.Q. --
I HAVE VERY LITTLE TIME, SERGEANT! MEETING OR NO MEETING--YOU MUST GIVE THIS MESSAGE TO COMMISSIONER GORDON AT ONCE!
PRIVATE
WHO ARE YOU? WHAT IS THIS ALL ABOUT?
I AM AKELDAMA--THE ANNIHILATOR! I CAN KILL ANYONE WITHIN A RADIUS OF FIVE MILES!
I NEED KNOW ONLY THE FACE AND LOCATION OF MY INTENDED TARGET. WHEREUPON I CONCENTRATE MY LETHAL ENERGIES AND PROJECT MENTAL WAVES THAT PRODUCE HEART FAILURE!
UTTER SILENCE GREETS THIS ASTOUNDING AND BIZARRE PRONOUNCEMENT--
YOU REGARD ME STRANGELY! DO YOU DOUBT MY WORD? I SHALL DEMONSTRATE!
AT THIS MOMENT THERE IS A MAN SELLING CHESTNUTS AT THE CORNER OF FREMONT AND GROVE. I WILL NOW CONCENTRATE--AND KILL HIM!
TWO MINUTES LATER...
IT IS DONE! WE SHALL MEET AGAIN... VERY SOON!
8

ADVERTISEMENT

SUPERMAN IN THE BIG FALL
GREAT KRYPTON! THANKS TO MY X-RAY VISION I CAN SEE THAT ELEVATOR CABLE GETTING READY TO SNAP.
THIS IS A JOB FOR SUPERMAN, NOT CLARK KENT.
"BEFORE YOU CAN SAY UP, UP AND AWAY, SUPERMAN IS STREAKING UP THE ELEVATOR SHAFT TO THE 73RD FLOOR
I'M SCARED.
LET ME OUT OF HERE.
DON'T BE SCARED, KIDS. I'LL GET YOU ALL DOWN SAFELY. MEANTIME, ENJOY SOME HOSTESS® CUP CAKES.
GEE!!! SUPERMAN AND HOSTESS CUP CAKES!!!
DON'T FORGET THE LUSCIOUS CREAMED FILLING!
I LOVE THE FUDGY ICING!!!! THE DEEP, DARK CHOCOLATY CAKE!!
SOMETIME LATER...
AND WERE YOU SCARED DURING THIS DARING RESCUE BY SUPERMAN???
WE KNEW SUPERMAN WOULD SAVE US!
BESIDES WE WERE TOO BUSY ENJOYING THESE HOSTESS CUP CAKES.
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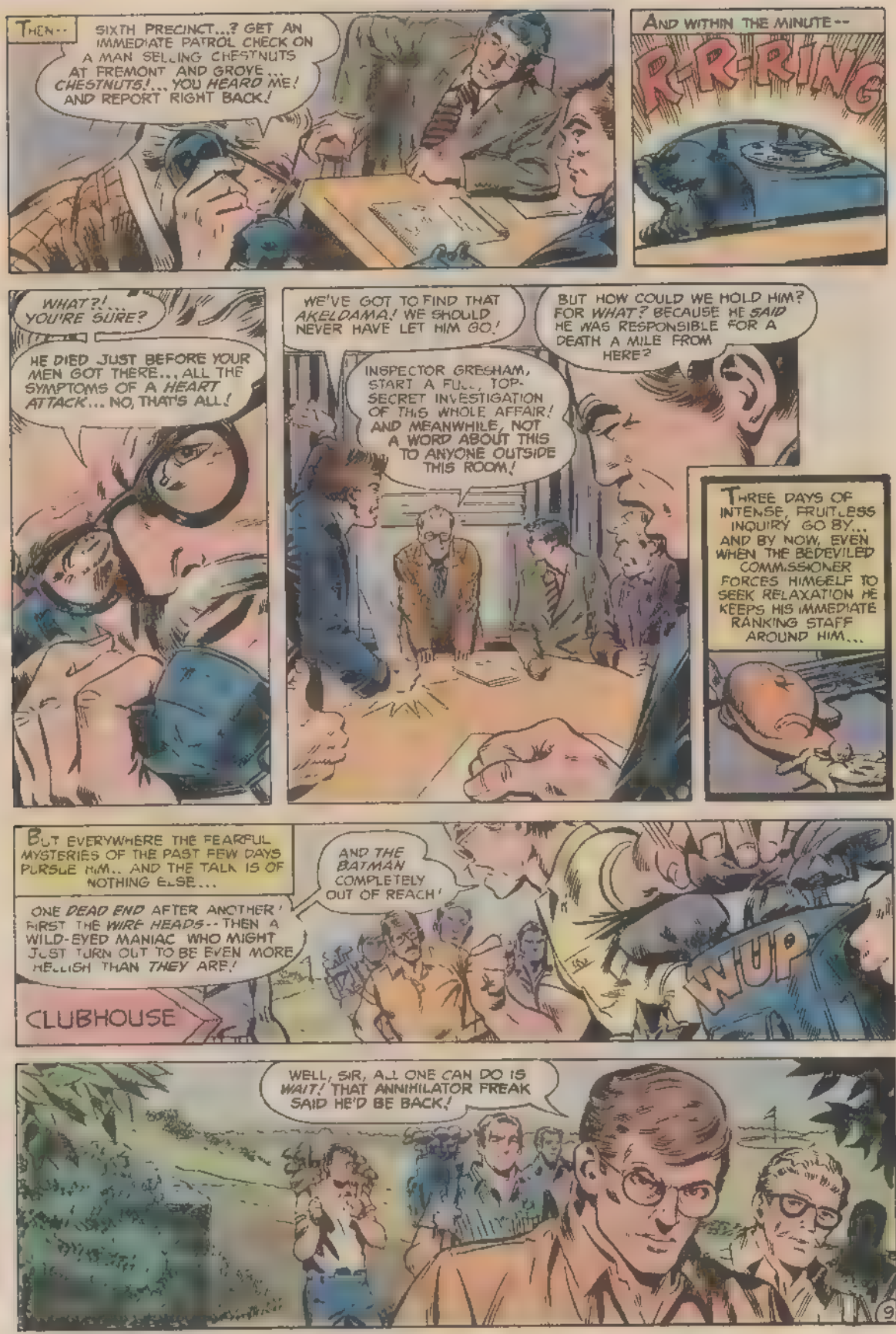
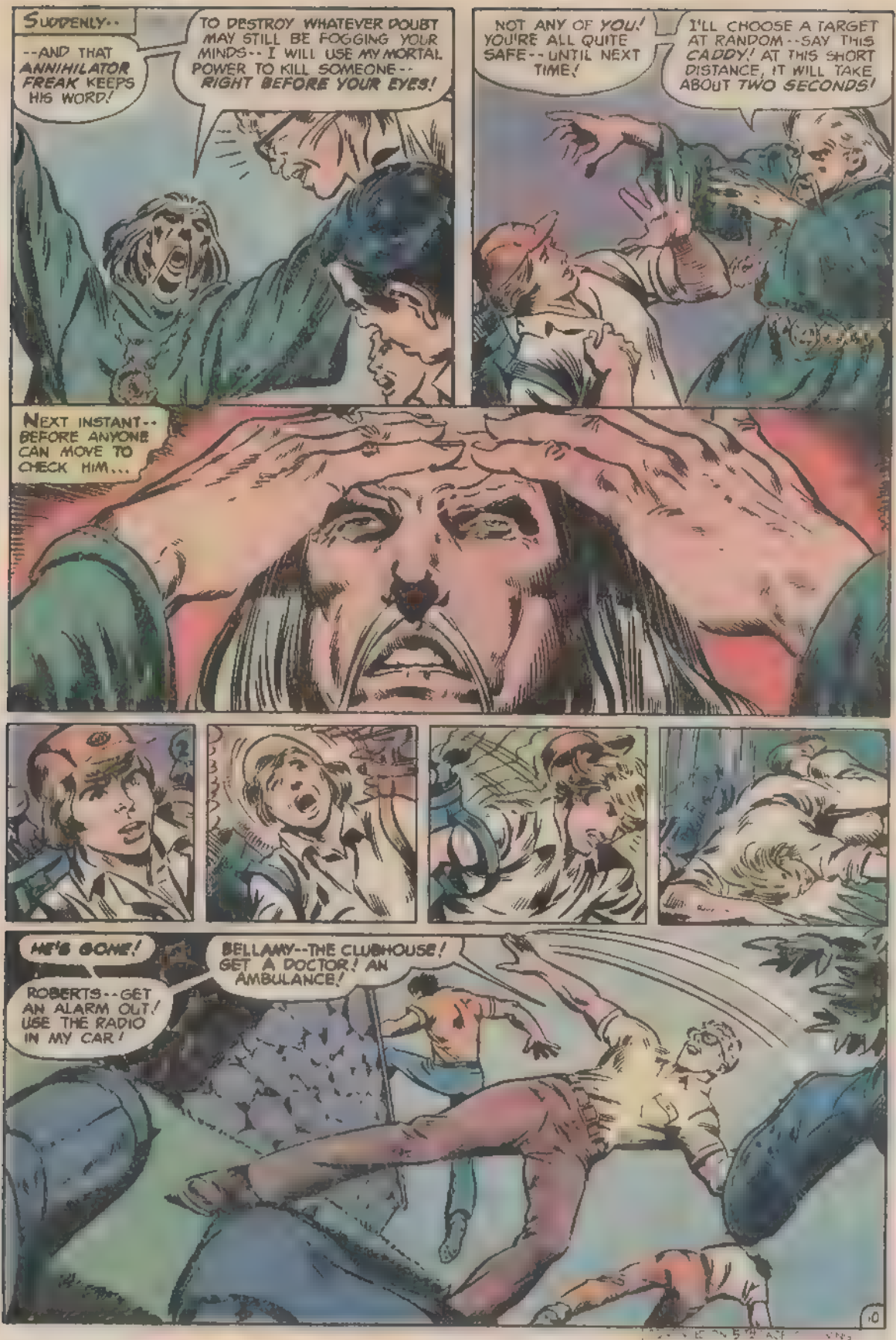

THEN--
SIXTH PRECINCT...? GET AN IMMEDIATE PATROL CHECK ON A MAN SELLING CHESTNUTS AT FREMONT AND GROVE... CHESTNUTS!... YOU HEARD ME! AND REPORT RIGHT BACK!
AND WITHIN THE MINUTE--
R-R-RING
WHAT?!... YOU'RE SURE?
HE DIED JUST BEFORE YOUR MEN GOT THERE... ALL THE SYMPTOMS OF A HEART ATTACK... NO, THAT'S ALL!
WE'VE GOT TO FIND THAT AKELDAMA! WE SHOULD NEVER HAVE LET HIM GO!
BUT HOW COULD WE HOLD HIM? FOR WHAT? BECAUSE HE SAID HE WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR A DEATH A MILE FROM HERE?
INSPECTOR GRESHAM, START A FULL, TOP-SECRET INVESTIGATION OF THIS WHOLE AFFAIR! AND MEANWHILE, NOT A WORD ABOUT THIS TO ANYONE OUTSIDE THIS ROOM!
THREE DAYS OF INTENSE, FRUITLESS INQUIRY GO BY... AND BY NOW, EVEN WHEN THE BEDEVILED COMMISSIONER FORCES HIMSELF TO SEEK RELAXATION HE KEEPS HIS IMMEDIATE RANKING STAFF AROUND HIM...
BUT EVERYWHERE THE FEARFUL MYSTERIES OF THE PAST FEW DAYS PURSUE HIM.. AND THE TALK IS OF NOTHING ELSE...
ONE DEAD END AFTER ANOTHER! FIRST THE WIRE HEADS--THEN A WILD-EYED MANIAC WHO MIGHT JUST TURN OUT TO BE EVEN MORE HELLISH THAN THEY ARE!
AND THE BATMAN COMPLETELY OUT OF REACH!
WHUP
CLUBHOUSE
WELL, SIR, ALL ONE CAN DO IS WAIT! THAT ANNIHILATOR FREAK SAID HE'D BE BACK!
9


SUDDENLY--
--AND THAT ANNIHILATOR FREAK KEEPS HIS WORD!
TO DESTROY WHATEVER DOUBT MAY STILL BE FOGGING YOUR MINDS--I WILL USE MY MORTAL POWER TO KILL SOMEONE--RIGHT BEFORE YOUR EYES!
NOT ANY OF YOU! YOU'RE ALL QUITE SAFE--UNTIL NEXT TIME!
I'LL CHOOSE A TARGET AT RANDOM--SAY THIS CADDY! AT THIS SHORT DISTANCE, IT WILL TAKE ABOUT TWO SECONDS!
NEXT INSTANT--BEFORE ANYONE CAN MOVE TO CHECK HIM...
HE'S GONE!
ROBERTS--GET AN ALARM OUT! USE THE RADIO IN MY CAR!
BELLAMY--THE CLUBHOUSE! GET A DOCTOR! AN AMBULANCE!

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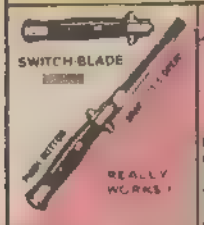


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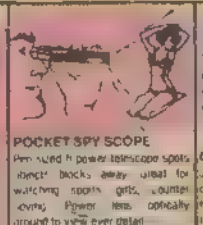

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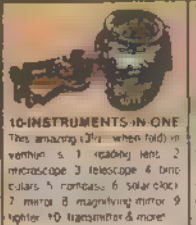

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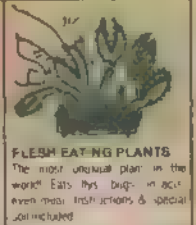

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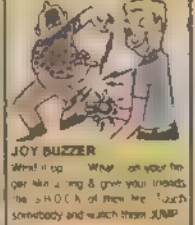

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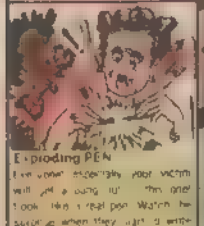

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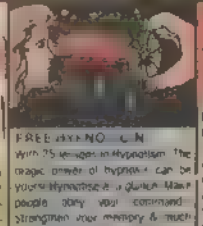

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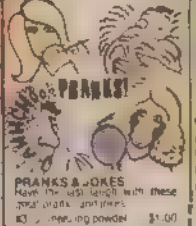


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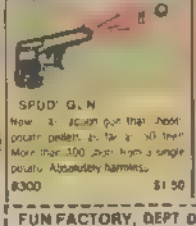

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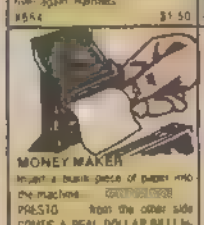

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WE'LL LET THAT REPORT STAND, AT LEAST TEMPORARILY ...WE'RE THE ONLY ONES WHO SAW WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED, SO THE REAL STORY IS STILL SAFE WITH US!
O'HARA, NEWS OF THIS COULD WELL SET OFF A ROARING PANIC IN GOTHAM! IT'S MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER NOW TO KEEP IT QUIET--UNTIL WE GET OUR HANDS ON HIM!
BUT AT THE MOMENT, THE PROSPECT OF LAYING A HAND ON THE SELF-STYLED ANNIHILATOR SEEMS REMOTE INDEED--
AND THEN A FUNNY THING HAPPENS TO AKELDAMA ON HIS WAY TO WHEREVER--
REACH!
OR YOU'LL PUT ON TEN POUNDS ALL OF A SUDDEN--IN LEAD!
AND DON'T TRY THEM BUG EYES ON US, BROTHER! YOU CAN'T SEE OUR FACES, SO THERE'S NOTHIN' YOU CAN DO BUT COME ALONG NICE AND QUIET!
AFTER WHICH--
WE'LL LAY DOGGO AWHILE - TILL THE ROADBLOCKS AROUND HERE GO DOWN--THEN WE'LL BRING HIM IN!
11

ALMOST THREE HOURS HAVE PASSED BEFORE AKELDAMA'S BONDS ARE FINALLY REMOVED

WHO ARE YOU? WHY HAVE YOU BROUGHT ME HERE? WHAT DO YOU WANT?

A SMALL FAVOR! YOU'RE GONNA KILL SOMEBODY FOR US -- IN YOUR SPECIAL WAY!

WHY -?

NEVER MIND WHY! FROM NOW ON YOU'RE WORKING FOR US!

WE GOT ALL THE INFO YOU NEED! HERE'S A PICTURE OF THE GUY YOU'RE GONNA *DROP*! HE'S HALF A MILE FROM HERE -- SO YOU WON'T HAVE ANY TROUBLE!

YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF ME AND MY METHODS AMAZES ME! ONLY A HANDFUL OF PEOPLE ARE EVEN AWARE OF MY EXISTENCE!

--AND ONE OF THAT HANDFUL IS ONE OF *OUR* PEOPLE... A *FINGER*, YOU MIGHT SAY!

HE'S IN A THREE-STORY BROWNSTONE TOWN HOUSE AT SIX EAST STREET, FACING THE RIVER. RIGHT NOW HE'S ALONE IN A ROOM ON THE TOP FLOOR...

OKAY, GO TO WORK!

FINISHED! HE'S *DEAD*!

I'M GONNA PAY A V S T TO EAST STREET, RIGHT NOW AND -ER PAY MY RESPECTS.

MY BOYS'LL BE *OUTSIDE* THIS DOOR! SO DON'T TRY ANYTHING THAT COULD GET YOU BLOWN AWAY!

12

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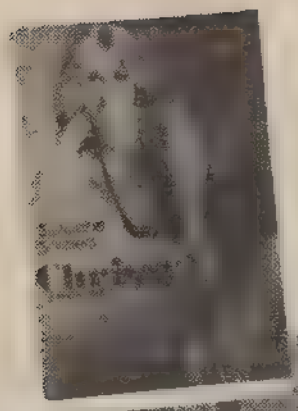
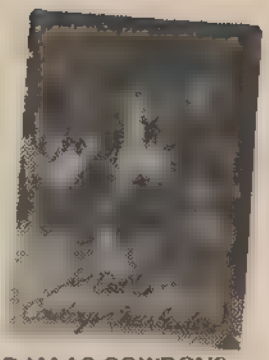
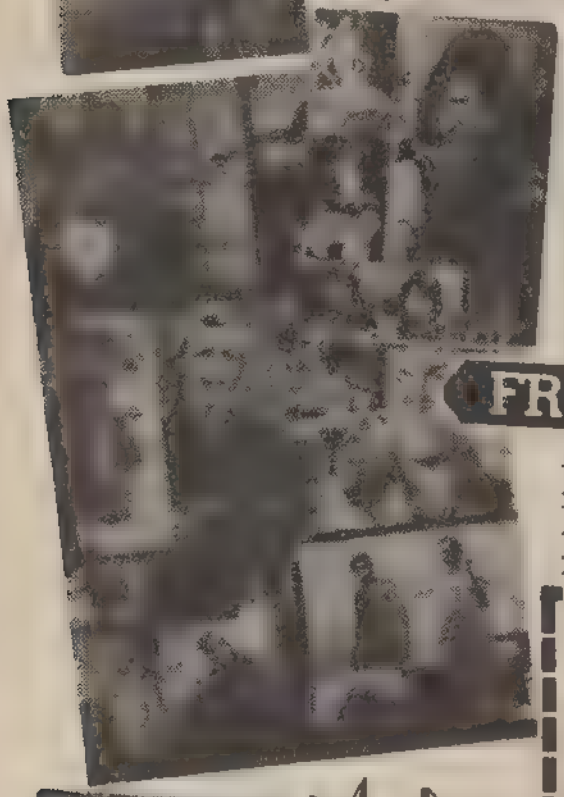
## GIANT WALL-SIZED POSTERS IN FULL COLOR!







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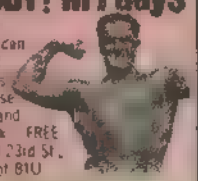

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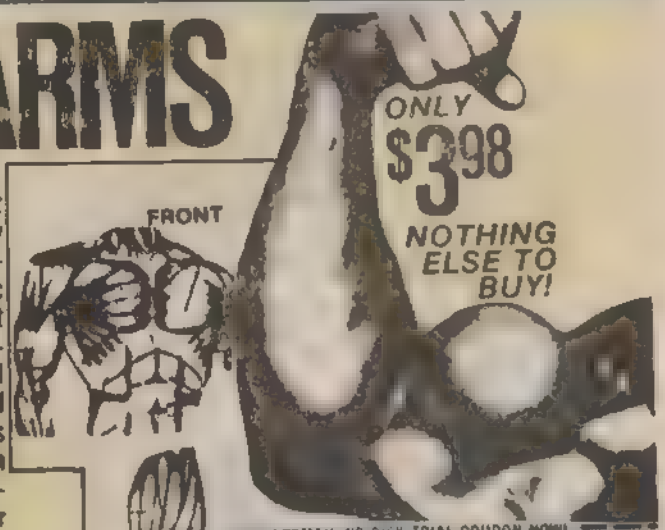


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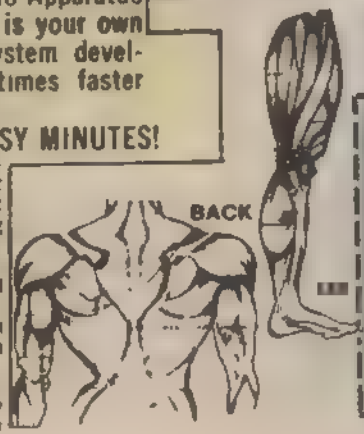


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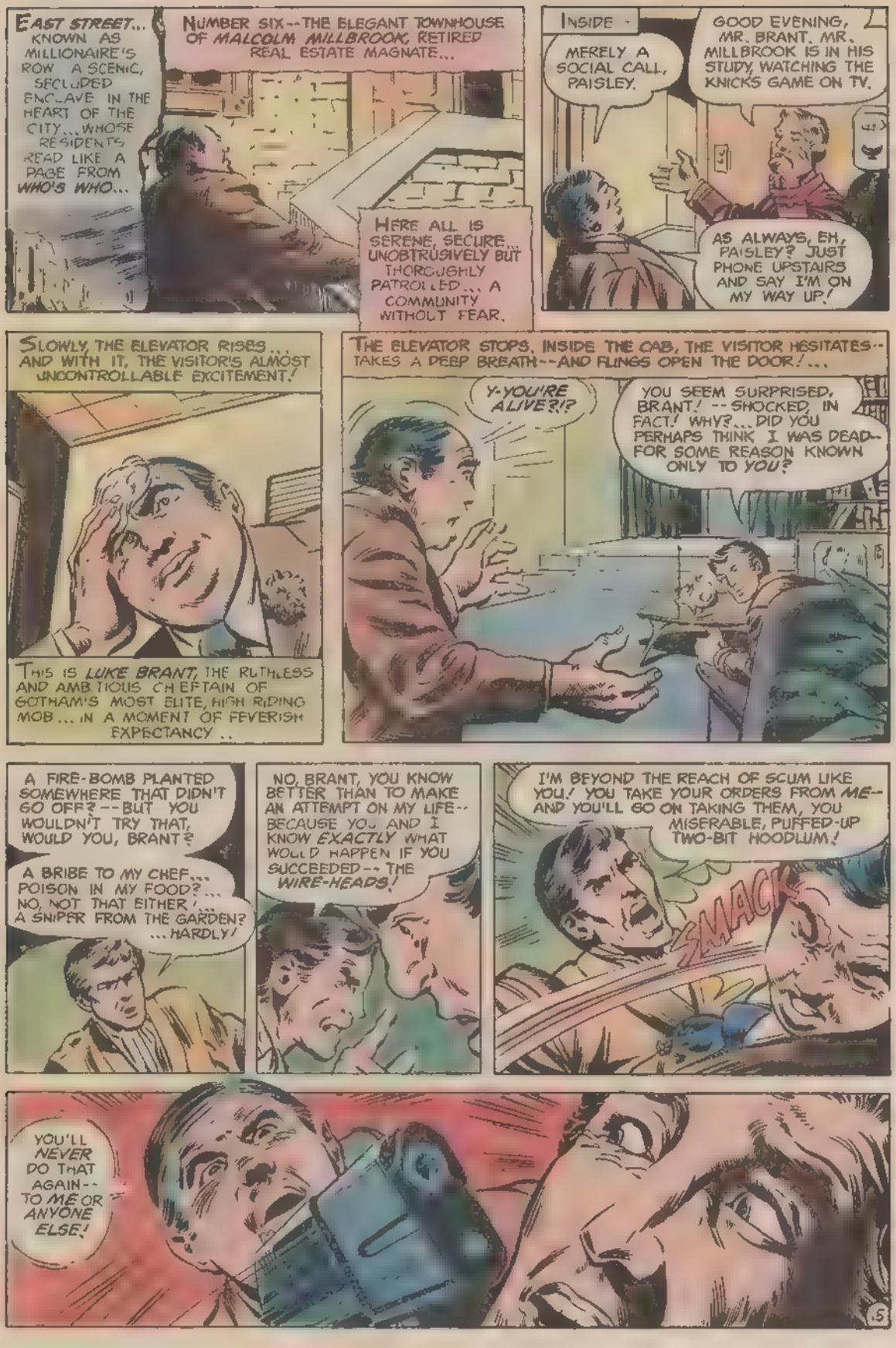
EVEN AS THE STEEL DOOR CLANGS SHUT AKELDAMA LEAPS UP CLAWING AT HIS FACE
--RIPPING AWAY EVERY VESTIGE OF THE DEADLY WIZARD --
--TO REVEAL--
--THE BATMAN!
FROM HIS UTILITY BELT, HE PULLS TWO SMALL PLASTIC BOMBS...
I COULD BLAST IT OPEN... BUT I'M NOT SURE OF THE SITUATION OUTSIDE-- SO I'LL INVITE THEM INSIDE -- WITH A COUPLE OF HARMLESS POPS!
BAMM BRANGG
YA HEAR THAT?
HE'S GOT SOMETHIN'-- MAYBE NITRO OR DOOLY-- TRYIN' TO JAM-SHOT THE DOOR!
I'LL UNLOCK IT AND GO IN! YOU TWO STAY CLOSE, COVER OUT HERE!
IT'S UNLOCKED-- BUT I CAN'T GET IT OPEN!
HELP ME SHOVE!
IT DON'T BUDGE AN INCH! C'MON, OK, GET A SHOULDER IN HERE!
13

ALL AT ONCE--BEAUTIFULLY TIMED--THE BATMAN STANDS ASIDE
...AND IN THEY FLY!
--AND KEEP FLYING!
THE B-B-BATMAN--?!?
PROW!
WHUMP!
IT MUST BE SOMEONE WHO KNEW ALL ABOUT AKELDAMA, AND THAT HE'D PROMISED TO RETURN TO GORDON!
SOMEONE WHO COULD CONSTANTLY POST THE MOB ON GORDON'S WHEREABOUTS, SO THEY'D STAY CLOSE--THEN SUMMON THEM INSTANTLY WHEN AKELDAMA SUDDENLY REAPPEARED!
I KNOW WHO THEIR SECRET CONNECTION IS!
DO YOU KNOW, READER?
NEXT STOP--EAST STREET--AND THE MASTER OF THE PLATINUM ANKH WIRE-HEADS--THE OVERLORD HIMSELF!
ASTONISHING HOW FAST THEY TOOK THE BAIT! I THOUGHT I'D HAVE TO STAGE THAT "MENTAL WAVES" HOCUS-POCUS THREE OR FOUR TIMES BEFORE THEIR P.D. CONNECTION GOT THE AKELDAMA STORY TO THEM--AND THEY BELIEVED IT!


EAST STREET... KNOWN AS MILLIONAIRE'S ROW A SCENIC, SECLUDED ENCLAVE IN THE HEART OF THE CITY... WHOSE RESIDENTS READ LIKE A PAGE FROM WHO'S WHO...
NUMBER SIX--THE ELEGANT TOWNHOUSE OF MALCOLM MILLBROOK, RETIRED REAL ESTATE MAGNATE...
HERE ALL IS SERENE, SECURE... UNOBTRUSIVELY BUT THOROUGHLY PATROLLED... A COMMUNITY WITHOUT FEAR.
INSIDE -
GOOD EVENING, MR. BRANT. MR. MILLBROOK IS IN HIS STUDY, WATCHING THE KNICKS GAME ON TV.
MERELY A SOCIAL CALL, PAISLEY.
AS ALWAYS, EH, PAISLEY? JUST PHONE UPSTAIRS AND SAY I'M ON MY WAY UP!
SLOWLY, THE ELEVATOR RISES... AND WITH IT, THE VISITOR'S ALMOST UNCONTROLLABLE EXCITEMENT!
THIS IS LUKE BRANT, THE RUTHLESS AND AMBITIOUS CHIEFTAIN OF GOTHAM'S MOST ELITE, HIGH RIDING MOB... IN A MOMENT OF FEVERISH EXPECTANCY..
THE ELEVATOR STOPS. INSIDE THE CAB, THE VISITOR HESITATES-- TAKES A DEEP BREATH--AND FLINGS OPEN THE DOOR!...
Y-YOU'RE ALIVE?!?
YOU SEEM SURPRISED, BRANT! --SHOCKED, IN FACT! WHY?... DID YOU PERHAPS THINK I WAS DEAD-- FOR SOME REASON KNOWN ONLY TO YOU?
A FIRE-BOMB PLANTED SOMEWHERE THAT DIDN'T GO OFF? --BUT YOU WOULDN'T TRY THAT, WOULD YOU, BRANT?
A BRIBE TO MY CHEF... POISON IN MY FOOD?... NO, NOT THAT EITHER!... A SNIPER FROM THE GARDEN? ...HARDLY!
NO, BRANT, YOU KNOW BETTER THAN TO MAKE AN ATTEMPT ON MY LIFE-- BECAUSE YOU AND I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF YOU SUCCEEDED -- THE WIRE-HEADS!
I'M BEYOND THE REACH OF SCUM LIKE YOU! YOU TAKE YOUR ORDERS FROM ME-- AND YOU'LL GO ON TAKING THEM, YOU MISERABLE, PUFFED-UP TWO-BIT HOODLUM!
SMACK
YOU'LL NEVER DO THAT AGAIN-- TO ME OR ANYONE ELSE!
5

AND AT THAT PERILOUS INSTANT -LITERALLY FROM OUT OF THE BLUE
KRUMP
THUM
YOU'RE NOT JUST A FOOL, BRANT-- YOU'RE A TOTAL MANIAC!
WOK
I'LL GET BOTH OF YOU!
BAM! BAM! BAM!
6

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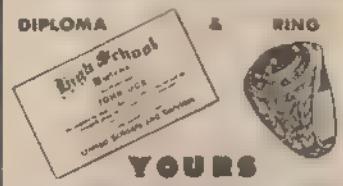

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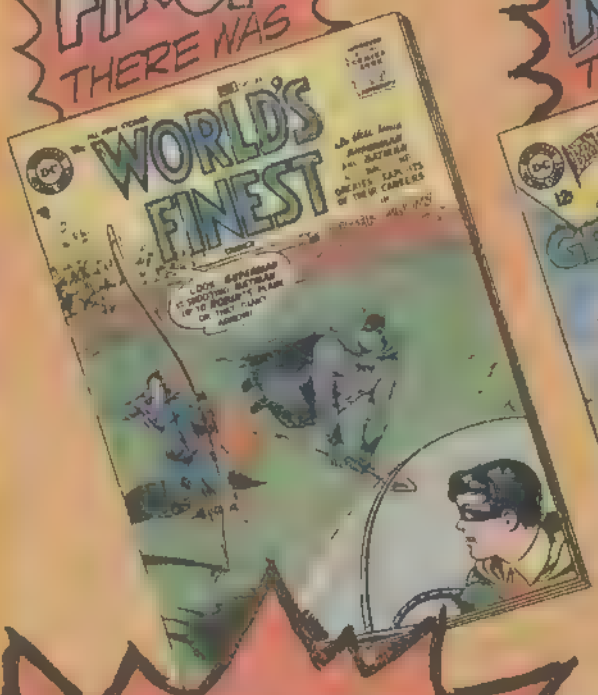


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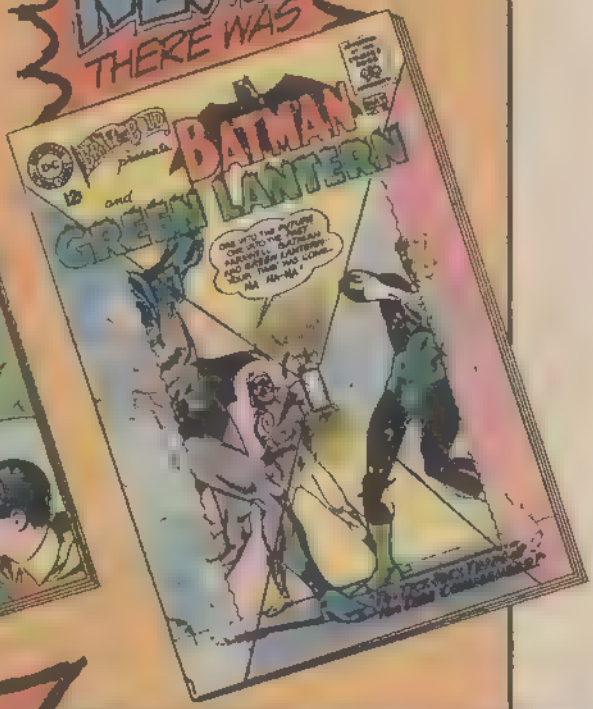


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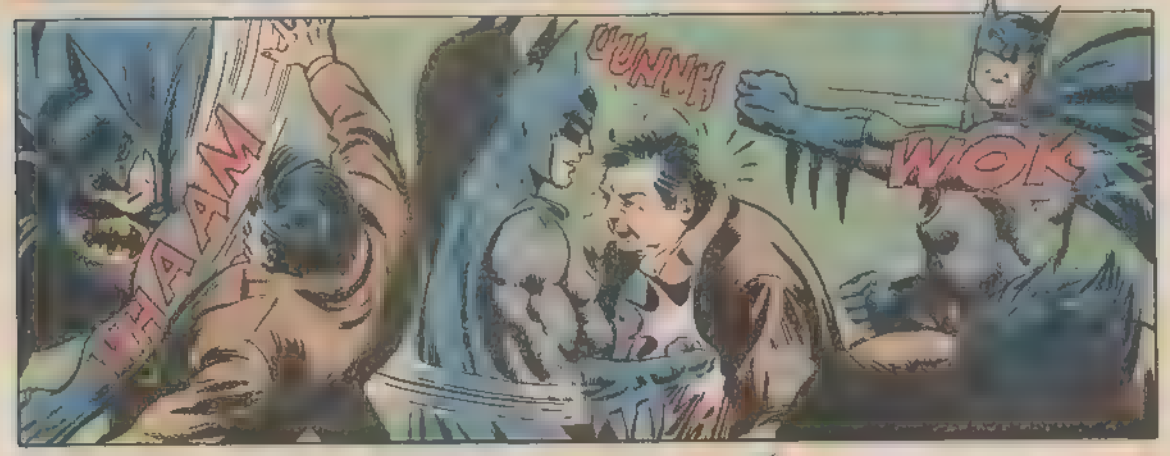
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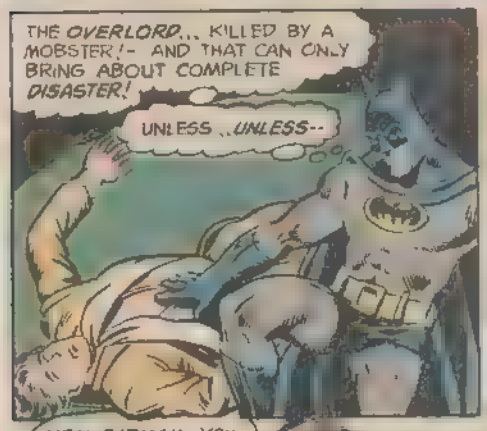
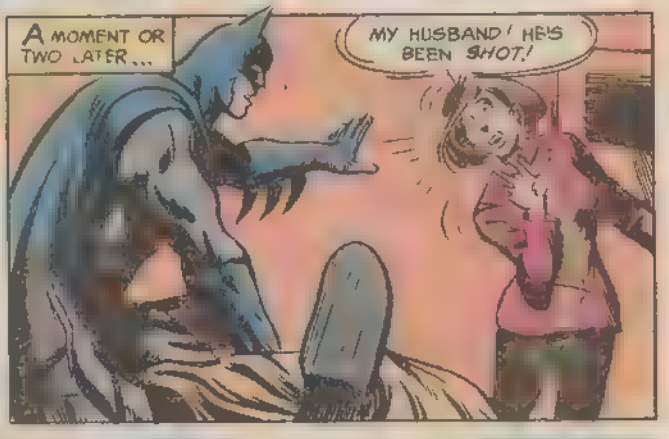
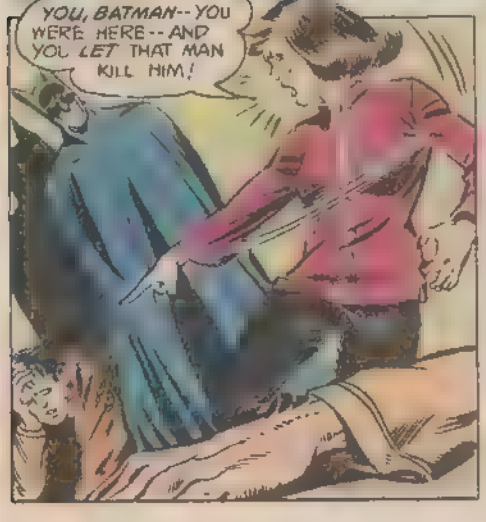
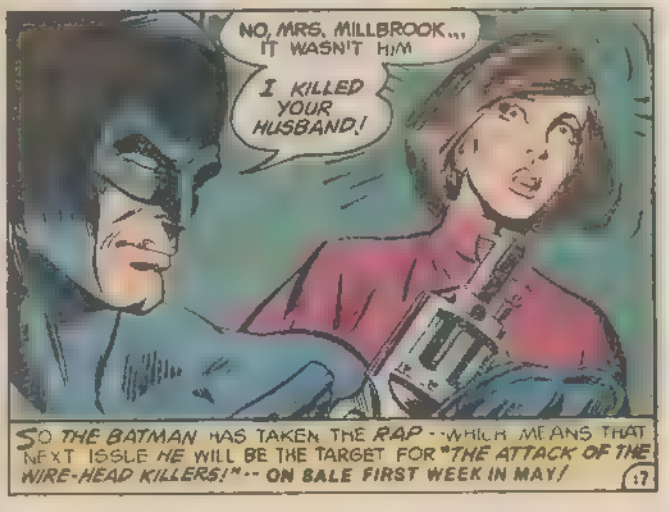
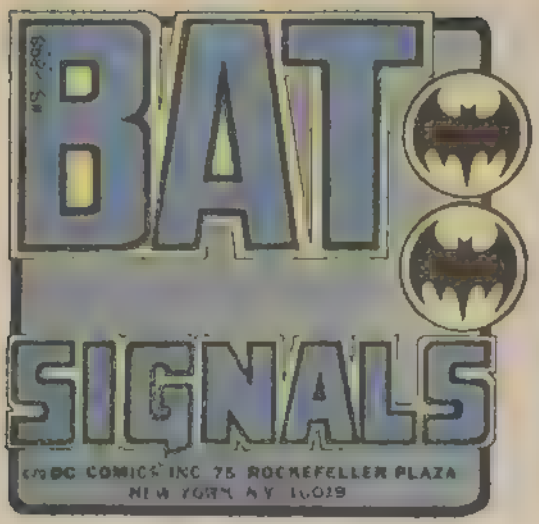

THE OVERLORD... KILLED BY A MOBSTER!- AND THAT CAN ONLY BRING ABOUT COMPLETE DISASTER!
UNLESS ..UNLESS--


A MOMENT OR TWO LATER...
MY HUSBAND! HE'S BEEN SHOT!


YOU, BATMAN-- YOU WERE HERE-- AND YOU LET THAT MAN KILL HIM!


NO, MRS. MILLBROOK... IT WASN'T HIM
I KILLED YOUR HUSBAND!
SO THE BATMAN HAS TAKEN THE RAP--WHICH MEANS THAT NEXT ISSUE HE WILL BE THE TARGET FOR "THE ATTACK OF THE WIRE-HEAD KILLERS!"-- ON SALE FIRST WEEK IN MAY!
17




**Dear Julie & Company,**

To say that I was skeptical over the prospects of the **Mad Hatter** returning in **BATMAN #297** is an understatement. In my opinion, such a thing could only turn out for the worst. Jervis Tetch is something of a dinosaur: a relic of an age long ago and nearly forgotten. He was part of the **Batman** of the 1950's, not the 1970's. The **Batman** he fought has been "dead" for some time now and the **Mad Hatter's** quest for the hero's cowl would be much harder to fulfill than it would have been twenty years ago. Ah, but that's the whole point! The **Mad Hatter** wasn't after **Batman's** head covering. In fact, he would have been pleased not to have met the Caped Crusader at all. For that reason alone, "The Mad Hatter Goes Straight" turned out much better than I expected. But there were other contributing factors as well.

Mainly, **Batman** didn't stoop to becoming a shadow of his former self. Just because an old villain returns is no reason for the hero to take on old habits that we thought he'd gotten rid of. It was an interesting comparison between the two for just that reason. Whereas Tetch changed moods as quickly as he changed chapeaus, **Batman** remained constant. In the old days, the Caped Crusader would have tried many different methods of trapping the **Hatter** before stumbling on the right one. Instead, **Batman** waited till his foe set up a pattern before even trying to apprehend him. It's a more methodical **Batman** against a less organized criminal, and when that's the case, what doubt can there be about the outcome?

With that covering **Batman** mentally, what is more natural than next talking about his physical appearance? Since the **Hatter** is basically a '50's villain, I sort of expected a hint or two in the direction of **Batman's** altered looks, e.g. the old square jaw and the non-nocturnal schedule. There were none, however. **Batman** retained his spooky entrances and exits and the shadowed looks that have become somewhat of a trademark. Impressive was the panel on page 15 where the hero stood in the shadows as the villain realized he was there. And **Batman's** altering of the chef's hat to make a dunce cap was a perfect example of the grim humor he's been prone to use.

Since I'm on the subject of changes from the past, I might as well mention that the Darknight Detective defeated the **Mad Hatter** with surprising ease. There was a day when any villain could knock **Bats** silly with one "maniacal punch". Not so any more. The point has been made time and again that **Batman** is a master of hand-to-hand combat and that no common criminal could take him out with one lucky shot. So it was uncommonly pleasant to see him manhandle Jervis the way he did.

Just room for a quick word of thanks to Rich Buckler and Vince Colletta for the great art. Rich is one of the best pencillers around and since he hasn't done a **Batman** story in so long, well, absence makes the heart grow fonder. I hope his schedule permits another one soon.

MIKE WHITE
807 West Fond
Mackinaw, IL 61755

**We wouldn't say that it's absolutely impossible for Batman to be caught by a "maniacal punch", but the chances are a lot less than they used to be!—BR**

• • • • •

**Dear Editor:**

**BATMAN #297** was very intriguing. Rich Buckler's art was excellent and I particularly liked the lean, muscular look he gave **The Batman.** In addition, I enjoyed the one or two spots where **Batman** was pictured outside the panels.

It was delightful to see the **Mad Hatter** attempt to go straight (and it was very realistic to see him fail at every attempt!) **Batman's** psychological ploy (his attempt to smoke out the **Hatter** by giving a party in which a person would "throw his hat in the ring" by running for office while "passing the hat" for campaign contributions) was quite sophisticated for a comic book. **Batman's** tapping of the **Mad Hatter's** unconscious criminal sociopathic drives was more the work of a master psychologist than of a darknight detective.

Finally, the cover by Jim Aparo was lean, balanced and dynamic . . . plus, quite colorful and very pleasing to the eye and heart of this **Batman** fan.

STEPHEN SIEFFORTH
5K Lake Ridge Place
Cockeysville, MD 21030

• • • • •

**Dear Editor:**

For some time now, the character of Bruce Wayne has been remodeled into an image of an idle-rich, snobbish playboy who disappears at the slightest hint of danger. This change is unappealing and unnecessary.

I vastly prefer Bruce Wayne as he was. I don't mind him being a playboy; he always has been. But whatever happened to the philanthropist who donated huge sums to charities? The "old" Bruce Wayne was responsible and well-informed. It was not unusual for Commissioner Gordon to invite him along on police investigations. And when he had to be, the "old" Wayne was as courageous and resourceful as his alter ego.

The "new" Wayne, the effete snob, is too reminiscent of **Superman's** old Clark Kent role when he was "Clark the coward" instead of "Kent the klutz"! So how about bringing back the "old" Bruce Wayne, huh?

RICHARD ADAM BENSON
6500-A Shoreline Drive
Charlotte, NC 28214

**For more of Bruce Wayne, as Bruce Wayne, check out BATMAN #304, wherein we introduce a new feature: "The Public Life of Bruce Wayne"!—Bob Rozakis**

# Publishorial

## OUTSTRIPPING OURSELVES

August 29, 1977
Dear Mr. Schwartz:

Bob Reed and I have gone over the outline of the story for the new "Super-Hero" strip. We not only think it is good, we are quite enthusiastic about it. Please consider this the signal to get things under production.

Cordially,
Don Michel
Editor, Chicago Tribune—
New York News Syndicate, Inc.

January 16, 1978

Well, this is one strip we're not going to have to do much selling on. Mostly, we'll just sit around taking orders.

Salesman at the Chicago Tribune—
New York News Syndicate's
first presentation of the strip
to its men

EP-9

Yes, there is indeed going to be a DC comic strip and, if you're lucky, it's already running in your local newspaper. It's based on the JLA with all the intergalactic thrills and quick-tongued character interplay that have made THE JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA one of our most beloved books. The strip will,however, appear under what was once its working title: THE WORLD'S GREATEST SUPERHEROES.

We owe the name of the strip to the Chicago Tribune Syndicate. "When you have Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Flash, Green Lantern, Green Arrow, Black Canary—why, you've **got** the world's greatest superheroes," they exclaimed. "Say it."

You might wonder why we didn't say it sooner. At first glance, comic strips and comic books appear so similar that many people have questioned why the so-called "funny pages" aren't already bursting with comic book heroes. But despite initial appearances, the comic strip and comic book are two wholly different media. As Marty Pasko, Superman writer and now scripter of THE WORLD'S GREATEST SUPER HEROES says: "They seem to resemble each other because both use dialogue balloons and panels to tell a story. But that's exactly where the resemblance ends."

Once you examine them, the differences between comic strips and comic books seem legion and obvious and the sparsity of cross-overs all the more understandable. Comic strips, after all, unfold their stories in cramped spaces and in black and white. Comic books have the luxury of both color and size.

A comic book story is designed to be read in one sitting. But each installment in a comic strip tale is punctuated by a 24-hour lag. Each daily strip has to be simple enough to be memorable, but engrossing enough to sustain interest until the next installment appears.

Then there is Sunday. For the people who buy only the Sunday edition of a newspaper, the strip has to encapsulate the essential story line of the preceding week. But for those people who buy the Sunday paper in **addition** to the other six days, the strip has to provide something new. There are other complexities, too. The Sunday strip has to be constructed so that certain panels can be rearranged and others dropped in order to accomodate both a tabloid-size and full-size page.

Obviously, a comic strip is governed by many more strictures than a comic book. Even the audience for a strip taxes the imagination of its creators. With a comic book, we can generally project the age of our readers within a ten-year span. And we dare to imagine that you really like our material (albeit some issues more than others) since you voluntarily spend your own money to get it.

But how many people buy a whole paper just for the comic strips? Comic strips are like TV shows. Once you've bought the set (or in this case, the paper) you simply flip the channel to those you like. The most successful comic strips are ones with enormous mass appeal—those that have managed to capture the interest of businessmen, homemakers and workers of both sexes, of eight-year-olds and octogenarians and everyone in between.

Small wonder that the majority of strips have specialized in punchline humor or the day-to-day problems of middle-American family life (newspapers' situation comedies). Consider the contrast to comic books. Jules Feiffer summed up the basics when he recalled his reaction to the first issue of DETECTIVE COMICS, March, 1937:

> "It looked different. Crime was fought in larger panels, fewer to a page (unlike the first comic books which used the shape and style of the existing newspaper strips). Most stories were complete in that issue . . . And a lot less shilly-shallying before getting down to the action."

Imagine now, forty-one years after comic books diverged from comic strips and carved their own unique identity, what it must be like to create a strip with characters from a format large enough to spawn **super** heroes. Imagine the challenge of meeting all the demands of a comic strip without diminishing in any way the Olympian stature of the Justice Leaguers or the epic scale of their adventures.

That is why we're so proud that the team we put together outstripped even the Tribune's expectations with the richness and vitality of their work. Julius Schwartz as editor has brought to the strip all the caring and inspiration that infuse every project on which he works. The writer, Marty Pasko, has steadily built a tale of human interaction while still managing to tell a fast-paced story in a basically slow-paced medium.

George Tuska, the penciller on the team, in two panels can move so deftly from outer space to fathoms below the North Pole that he seems to have invented cinemascope. George has extensive experience in strips as well as comic books. But the real tip of our hat goes to George's vigorous imagination. As Marty says, "George has the phenomenal ability to take a long,static scene of two people talking to each other and make it look dynamic."

As inker, Vince Colletta has given heroic weight and substance to the men and a truly luscious quality to the women that in no way makes them seem less capable. Actually, in that pre-dawn before the new DC, George and Vinnie used to work together to the immense delight of fans. Once again, you'll be able to see why.

What if your paper isn't carrying THE WORLD'S GREATEST SUPERHEROES? Write and tell them how very much you want to see it. Get your friends to write, too. Newspapers want to please their readers. This is one place where your voice really can be effective.

Wishing you all the very best—

Jenette

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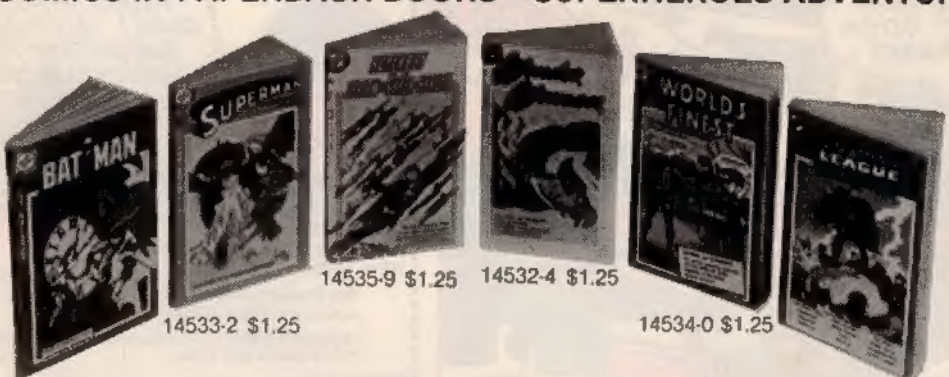


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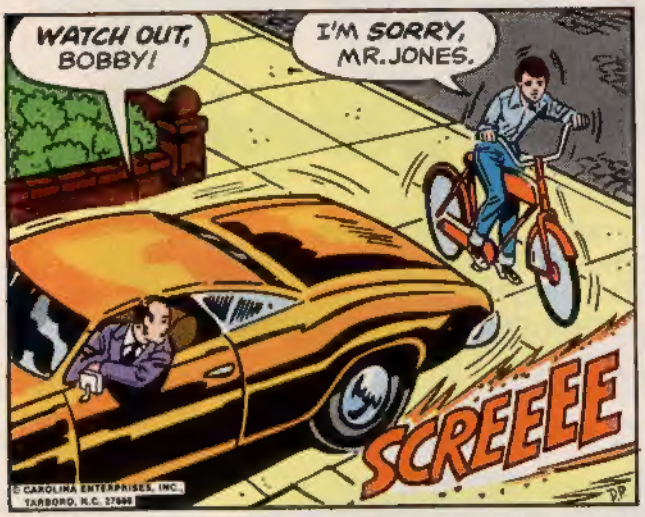


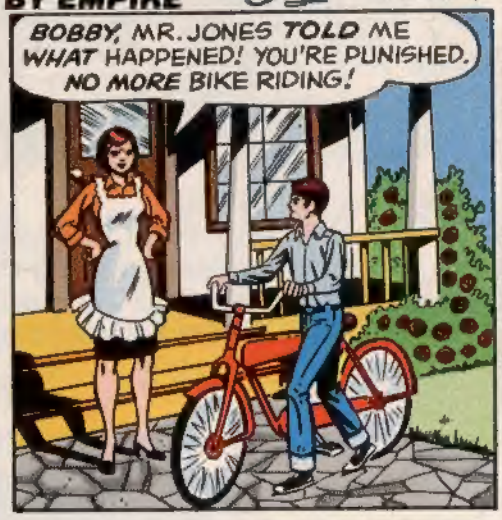


BOBBY FEELING BADLY, IS NOW OUT WALKING AND...

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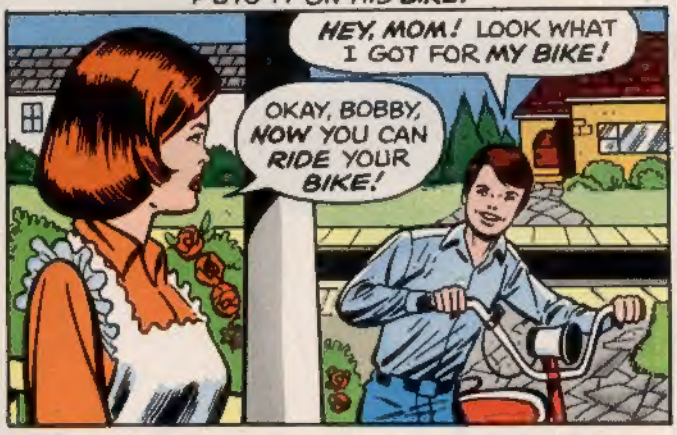


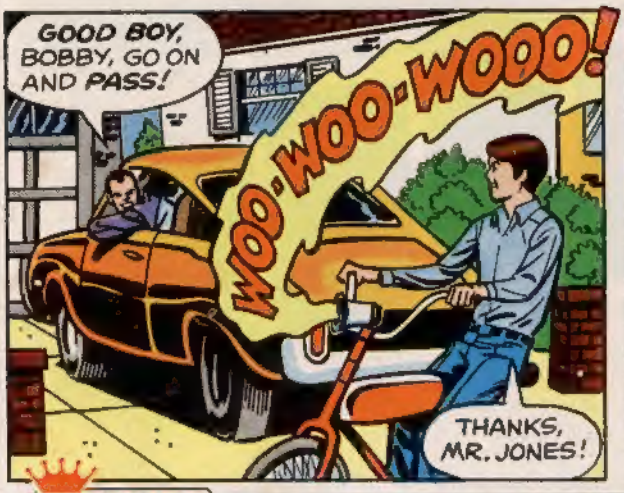


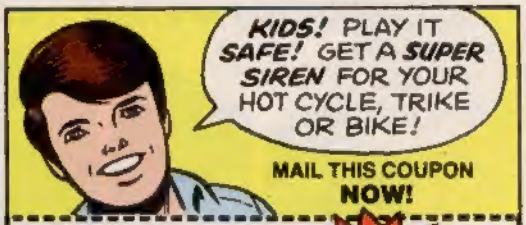


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